

Wright

March 28, 1959

Dear Bob and Mari:

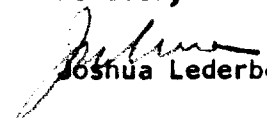
Lots of good wishes to you both, and to Astril and Siri!

We are getting more or less well settled here; actually, Esther, Ann, Hirota Peter Sneath and Ganesan are working in a cozy but working lab., and I've been catching up with my paper work -- e.g., too long unreviewed mss. from Iino, the Orskovs, etc. The geographic setting out here is absolutely marvelous, and we counted ourselves very lucky to get away from the savage winter in the midwest. Especially after Kornberg and his crew get out here this summer, and we move into the medical center now abuilding, we should have no excuses for complaints.

I am enclosing the Spizizen paper you asked about, to save you time looking for the Oct. 1958 PNAS where it appeared. It is a remarkable finding. I suspect that the cracking of the cell walls during spore germination may have something to do with it; whether ascospore germination is quite comparable I don't know. Are germinating yeast spores sensitive to osmotic shock? In any case, it would certainly be worth a try, to implant either DNA or R-plasmids-- though I imagine some others have probably done the simplest kinds of trials without too much success. Unquestionably you ought to push hard on the wall-splitting enzymes, since this is bound to give you a useful outcome, whether or not you are lucky with transductions on the protoplasts. Herschel Mitchell has been trying to do somewhat similar things with Neurospora, but I doubt he has given it his undivided attention. You might give a little thought to Neurospora as an analogous material-- it has many disadvantages, but the possible advantage of a mycelium that is far ~~easier~~ easier to break up than yeast cells are.

There's no point crying over spilt milk ~~called~~ Canberra, though I wouldn't necessarily assume that a position in CSIRO there's foreclosed even now, and you might do worse than to try to make or keep some contact there, e.g., with Fenner or Langridge and Frankel so they have some inkling of your interest. But would you be keen on leaving Melbourne now that you are set up there domestically? I had thought there was a more obvious niche for you at CSIRO than at Melbourne U, but what you have to do now is to make one for yourself! We were distressed and unhappy for you on hearing about your low morale, but could understand it, and we all know how discouraging it can be to keep pushing in research. There is something to be said for having some other responsibilities of a cut-and-dried nature, be they teaching, administration, or applied research if only to have something to show for one's effort as the weeks and months drag by. At any rate, you should be able to understand why Rubbo might be a bit quizzical about extending himself to back up a staff appointment just now, and it is up to you to justify the confidence he and I and others have shown in you. Now that you are settled down a bit (and I hope you treasure that happy state for a little while) you should be able to show your mettle now.

As ever,

  
Joshua Lederberg